

The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

The Well-Known Novelist and the Creator of the "Craig Kennedy" Stories

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SYNOPSIS.

The New York police are mystified by a series of murders and other crimes. The principal clue to the criminal is the warning letter which is sent to the victims. Signed with a "clutching hand." The latest victim of the mysterious assassin is Taylor Dodge, the insurance president. His daughter, Elaine, employs Craig Kennedy, the famous scientific detective, to try to unravel the mystery. What Kennedy accomplishes is told by his friend, Jameson, a newspaper man. After many fruitless attempts to put Elaine and Craig Kennedy out of the way the Clutching Hand is at last found to be none other than Terry Bennett, Elaine's lawyer and the man she is engaged to marry. Bennett flees to the den of one of his Chinese criminals. The Chinese forces from Bennett the secret of the whereabouts of \$100,000. Then he gives the lawyer a poison which will suspend animation for months. Kennedy rescues Bennett's side just after he has lost consciousness.

NINETEENTH EPISODE

THE SAVING CIRCLES.

In an opium den down in a cellar in the heart of Chinatown, Long Sin lay in a bunk, contemplating what form of revenge he might suggest to his master, Wu Fang.

About him were many Chinese and even white men, all dreaming of the great things they would do, dreams which were dissipated into ashes, even as the drug in the pipes which gave them their shadowy forms.

Hop Ling, the proprietor, was just about to hand Long Sin a pipe with a half-cooked pill, when a well-dressed white man entered and gazed about. "See a white devil," he muttered to Hop Ling under his breath, calling his attention to the stranger.

Long Ling moved forward and accosted the newcomer. "Why does the white man visit us?" he asked suspiciously.

"I am Jack Sprague, the aviator," replied the visitor, still looking about. "I smoke the stuff for my nerves."

Long Sin considered a moment, then at a nod from Long Sin, whose opinion he valued highly, led Sprague over to an empty bunk near by.

Long Sin continued to eye the stranger critically. Finally as Sprague settled himself, the Chinaman pulled a small box from his trunk and moved toward the stranger.

"How are you?" greeted Long Sin.

"It was Sprague's turn now to be suspicious of Long Sin with his sinister smile."

"Are you an aviator?" pursued the Chinaman.

Sprague nodded. "You said it," he replied in laconic slang.

Long Sin squatted down and they talked and smoked. Half an hour later, with Sprague, his nerve restored and his curiosity aroused by the promises of Long Sin, accompanied his new friend out of the opium joint.

They passed through the narrow streets of the Chinese quarter and finally entered what looked like a ramshackle tenement. There Long Sin stopped and whispered to a servant, and a moment later they were admitted to an anteroom of Wu Fang, the suspect.

"Master," bowed Long Sin as Wu Fang entered. "I have here a man whom we may use."

Wu nodded graciously to Sprague, while his slave bent down and whispered in his ear in deep guttural, leaving his hands in expressive attitudes as though the air Wu's brow clouded, but at last he seemed to catch the idea.

"You mean, then, that he flies?" he asked.

Long Sin nodded. "Not only does he fly," he said, "but from his aeroplane he can drop anything and hit a mark."

"Come with me," beckoned Wu to Sprague, as he put on his street clothes to go out.

Some time earlier in the day Lieutenant Waters of the army, who had already interested Kennedy in a new explosive of his own invention, trotted and invited Craig to visit the fort on Staten Island at which he was stationed, and Craig had taken Elaine down on a visit.

They saw about everything there was to be seen, but the thing that interested Kennedy most was, of course, the explosive and the handling of it. In a storeroom of the fort Elaine picked up from a table a peculiar pointed instrument with a weighted head.

"That is one of the new aeroplane bombs that are being used in the European war," explained the Lieutenant. "How interesting!" remarked Elaine.

They stood for a moment chatting, then passed on until at last they came again to the entrance to the grounds of the fort where a sentry, pacing back and forth, saluted.

"Thank you so much," said Elaine as she gave Lieutenant Waters her hand.

"Indeed," agreed Craig. "We have had a most interesting visit. By the way, Lieutenant, come to my laboratory tomorrow morning. I would like to show you one or two very novel effects that I have been able to get from my invention."

"I shall be delighted," returned Lieutenant Waters, as they parted.

Just below the gate, on the slope, was a pile of pipe. None of the party noticed, but in one of the pipes, lying flat on its stomach, was a short, undersized Chinaman, one of the emissaries of Wu Fang, Sing Lee by name. With a keen air he was listening to all that Kennedy said.

No sooner had Craig and Elaine disappeared than Sing Lee, watching his chance while the sentry's back was turned, crept out of his hiding place and darted behind another shelter farther along.

He kept it up until at last he was out of sight of the sentry, shadowing Elaine and Craig.

I was busy pounding out a story for the Star when Craig, having left Elaine at the Dodge house after their visit to the fort, returned to the laboratory.

"Hard at it, I see, Walter," he greeted as he entered, ruffling up my hair playfully.

I rose and lighted a cigarette. As I struck the match I happened to glance out of the open window. There in the sunlight I could see what looked like the reflection of a mirror across the street in an empty lot.

"Look out of the window, Craig," I cried excitedly, moving closer to him and taking his arm. "I believe someone is watching us from that empty lot across the street."

"Wait a minute," he cautioned, now thoroughly alive to the situation. "Stoop down. We'd better not be seen looking over."

As we dodged out of the line of vision Kennedy seized the periscope which he had used often before and put its jointed sections together.

Craig raised the periscope slowly and gazed through it. There, sure enough, as I had guessed, in the loft of the old warehouse down the street could be seen the reflection of the lenses of a pair of glasses in the sunlight. In surprise we crept back and stood up.

The fact was that no sooner had Craig entered the laboratory than the same spying Sing Lee, who had followed his every movement at the fort, came cautiously down the street. He stopped before the laboratory, paused a moment, then went on.

A moment later the young Chinaman had entered the empty loft diagonally across the street from us. Looking the door carefully, he went to the window and cautiously peered out.

Then he went to a cupboard near by and opened it. From a shelf he took a pair of opera glasses and returned to the window, leveling them at our laboratory and searching intently.

Sing Lee was still gazing through the glasses out of the window when he heard someone approaching his outside door.

Lee jumped to the door and flung it open. Wu Fang, followed by Long Sin and Sprague, entered.

"Where is Kennedy—is he there?" demanded Wu.

"Yes—see—master," returned the young Chinaman, turning toward the window.

They all moved over and took up the field glasses in turn.

"Where has he been today?" queried Wu.

"At the fort on Staten Island with the white girl and a man, Lieutenant Waters. They are coming to the workshop across the street tomorrow morning to see some western magic with a thing named trodite that explodes."

At the word "explodes" Wu glanced quickly at Sprague.

"I have a plan," he remarked subtly, gathering them all about him and assigning separate parts to each as he outlined it.

That night at the fort all was quiet. In the railroad yards near by stood a freight train on a siding where it had been drilled late, loaded with a fresh consignment of the new explosive, trodite, from the mills.

A sentry was pacing up and down the elders beside the train when a very pretty girl made her way along the tracks.

"Can you tell me the way to the trolley?" she asked.

It was a perfectly simple question. But there was no mistaking the look she gave him. It was Flirty Florrie. She did not want the trolley. She wanted to flirt, and she used her eyes effectively.

"Two blocks to the left, madam," the sentry returned, setting his face sternly, for he had a sweetheart quite the equal of Flirty.

"Are you a man?" Flirty taunted, plucked at her failure.

He hesitated not knowing just what to do, then taking discretion to be the better part of valor, shouldered his musket and resumed his measured tread back and forth, while Flirty, with a grimace at him, disappeared toward the trolley.

But while Flirty had engaged his attention Sing Lee had come out of a hiding place near the yards and had

managed to sneak back of the shadow of the cars.

Between two of the cars sat a detective of the secret service smoking and hating his job. The Chinaman had passed the first line of defense. He now managed to sneak up behind the second. He raised a Chinese club and brought it down on the head of the unsuspecting detective, knocking him out.

The sentry paced by on the other side of the train. Quickly, after he had passed, the Chinaman went through the detective's pockets until finally he found a bunch of keys. He detached one from the ring, still keeping in the shadow as the sentry paced up and down, looked stealthily about until he saw a chance, then unlocked the door of the car and entered, closing it safely.

A few minutes later, laden with as much of the trodite as he could well carry and a bundle of heavy aero arrows he stole away as silently as he had come.

It was well after midnight when Kennedy and I were preparing to leave the laboratory. I was just about to switch off the lights when Kennedy raised his hand to stop me.

The far-away look on his face told me that he had heard a peculiar noise. He looked quickly at the ceiling.

"Listen, Walter," he continued. "I did. There was a noise above us on the roof, apparently as though someone had slid off."

Craig switched out the light himself and went quickly over to the table where he had left the periscope. Carefully putting it together again, he tiptoed over to the window, put the periscope out and slowly raised it to the roof.

We gazed through the eyepiece. A large white circle had been painted on our roof.

"What does it mean?" I queried. Kennedy was in a brown study. Suddenly he clapped his hands.

"I think I have it," he exclaimed. "Walter, take this turpentine. Go up and scrub the circle out. If you need

"Look!" he exclaimed, pointing. We crowded about the window. There was an aeroplane passing over the city.

"Just watch that warehouse over there."

We riveted our eyes on it. It was an anxious moment.

Already, had we known it, Sing Lee had quietly let himself into the loft, taken the glasses from the cupboard and leveled them at us in the laboratory.

Meanwhile, Sprague, of whom we learned later, had started his aeroplane flying from his hangar in the suburbs, and was now speeding over the city. As he passed he peered down, looking eagerly for the target—the white circle.

With expert precision he let go the bomb, and the deadly engine of destruction swooped down.

Straight to its mark it went. The old warehouse across from us rocked with the detonation. It seemed as if the whole top of it were blown to pieces.

The bomb that had been meant to destroy the laboratory had, by the quick change of the white circle, destroyed the hangout and the emissary of the Serpent!

Half an hour later, Long Sin was nervously reporting to Wu Fang in the secret den in Chinatown.

"That white devil, Kennedy, has defeated us again, master," he said deprecatingly.

"Again?" demanded Wu, his face livid with anger.

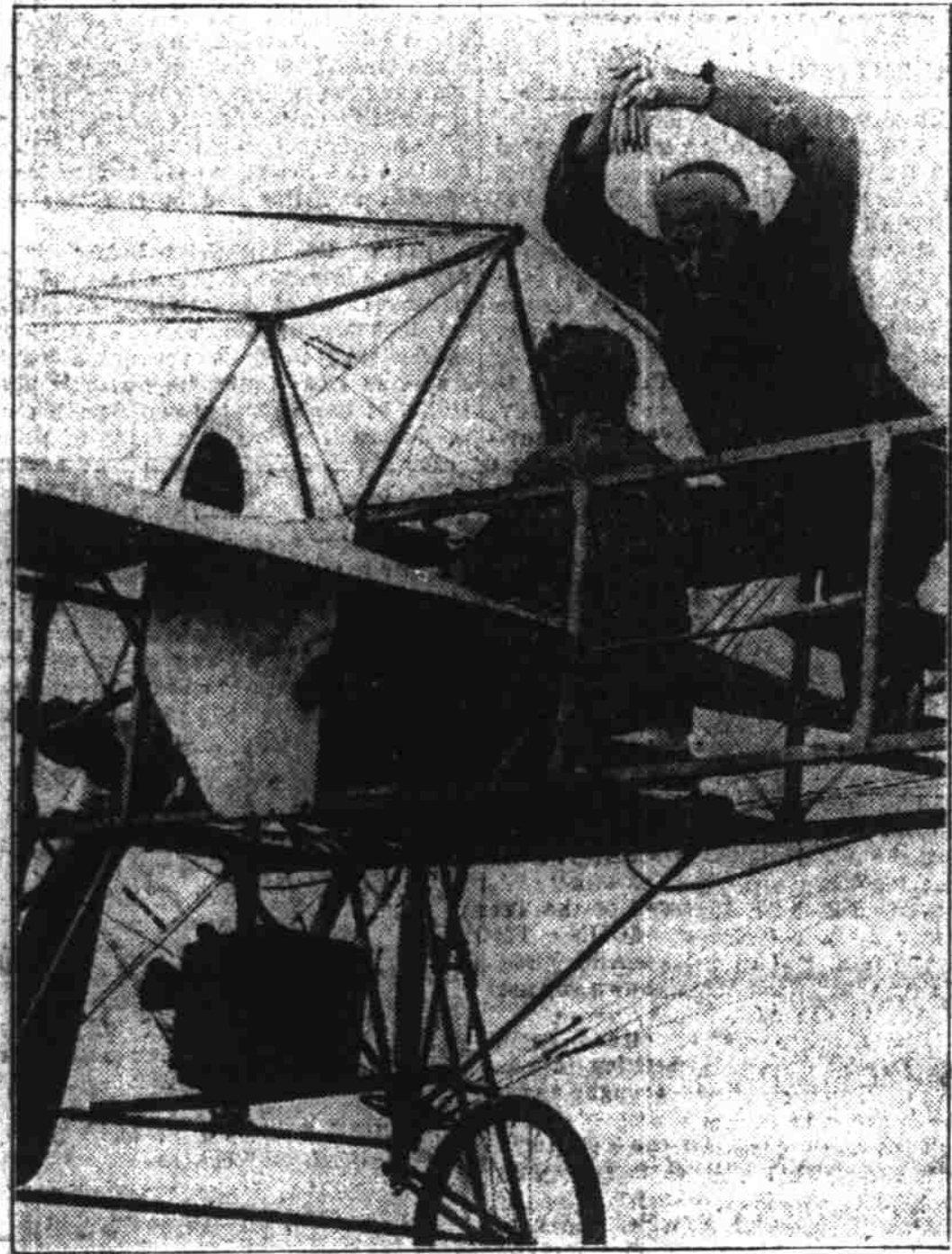
"Yes, master. He saw the circle—wiped it out—and painted a new one on the warehouse. The bomb fell on that—and Sing was killed."

"Someone shall pay for that," blazed Wu.

Far uptown, on the East side, Sprague led Wu and Long Sin to a little machine shop kept by a foreigner, Anton Schmidt.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" asked Schmidt.

"I wish you'd show us your new gyroscopic stabilizer," asked Sprague.



2 "Now," Ground Out Wu, Releasing the Bunch of Deadly Arrows.

more, get it. Only remove every trace of the circle."

While I was scrubbing away for dear life at the fresh paint on our roof Kennedy secured a large can of white paint and a brush and stealthily made his way to the rear of the old warehouse across the street.

Kennedy found a shed from which it was easy to get to the roof. There he set to work, too, immediately, painting a large circle on the warehouse exactly like that on our own roof which I was erasing.

We went home, and I, at least, thought little more about the matter. Quite early the next morning, however, we got around to the laboratory again to prepare for the visit of Lieutenant Waters in response to Kennedy's cordial invitation to witness the experiments with trodite.

Our speaking tube sounded finally, and I answered it. It was Elaine. Aunt Josephine and Lieutenant Waters, who had all arrived at the same time.

"Most peculiar thing, Kennedy," remarked the Lieutenant after the greetings were over. "We had a robbery at the fort last night—or rather, not exactly at the fort, for that would be impossible, but from a freight car in the yards."

"What did they get?" asked Craig. "Some trodite—enough to blow up a house, and some of those aeroplane arrows."

"Hm," considered Kennedy, gazing involuntarily at the ceiling and thinking doubtless of the white circle that had been on the roof.

"Listen!" cautioned Craig. Outside we could hear a buzz, as though a gigantic cicada were predicting warm weather. It was a peculiar sound, and Kennedy seemed to recognize it instantly. He sprang to the window and strained his eyes up at the sky.

Schmidt proudly led them to a corner. In an aluminum case was a peculiar little fly wheel set on gimbals so that it could rotate in any plane.

The inventor started it revolving. "Press down on it," suggested Schmidt.

Wu did so. The uncanny little wheel seemed actually to resent being forced to move out of the plane in which it had been started rotating.

"You know," explained Schmidt to Wu, "that when the gyroscopic is started rotating in one plane, it tends all ways to keep in that plane."

"With that steady my airship," put in Sprague, "there will be no chance for a mistake the next time. We can aim perfectly."

"I'll buy it, then," agreed Wu, quickly producing the money.

After the explosion in the warehouse, Kennedy, thoroughly alarmed for the safety of Elaine, had ordered me to accompany her on another visit to her cousin, Mary Brown, at their estate, Rockledge, near Lakewood, while he stayed in the city to help Lieutenant Waters trace down the robbery at the fort, if possible.

Elaine was easily reconciled to the banishment now that the weather was fine, and decided to do a little sketching in the country. She had loaded me down with the pleasant burden of her painting kit—sketch box, folding easel, camp chair and a large and gaudy sun umbrella. Jennings followed us to the car with the luggage.

As we entered the car we were all too happy at the idea of a holiday to notice that down the street was another young Chinaman of the same long as Sing Lee.

We had all boasted ourselves and Jennings had gone back into the house when Sam skulked around back of the car and, serpentlike, as was his master, Wu, wriggled over, crouching

down in the rear of the top, which was down and overhanging the back of the car.

"Go over the Forty-second street ferry, Francois," directed Elaine to the chauffeur. "Then we'll tell you just how to strike the best roads to Lakewood."

The spying Sam waited to hear no more, but glided quietly up the street as we shot down along the avenue to the ferry.

Rockledge was a handsome estate, and the house was one of the show places of Lakewood. Accordingly, Elaine lost no time in taking advantage of the recreation in the country which she had promised herself.

I had scarcely set down the art paraphernalia when she announced that she was going to use it right away. For several minutes I stood on the veranda overlooking the bright green terraces, holding the sketching kit and the umbrella and admiring the view.

Elaine came tripping gayly out on the porch in the neatest of little sketching costumes.

"Some parasol," I panted, opening the gay green and white striped shade. I shouldered it and paraded off with it, while Elaine followed, laughing.

"Here," she cried at last. "I'm going to do a landscape. Isn't that bit of hill beautiful? I want you over there—like that."

I took a pose where she directed, and she started to sketch.

Outside his hangar, a fough shed with a runway before it, Sprague was standing, talking to Wu and Long Sin.

"Master!" interrupted a low voice, deferentially.

It was Sam, who had hurried to the hangar after watching Elaine and the rest of us ride off.

"Well?" demanded Wu.

"The girl with another, her cousin, has gone with that slave of Kennedy to a place they call Lakewood across the river."

Though they did not know it, Kennedy had not been idle. With the aid of an agency of private detectives, which he had often employed for routine jobs, as well as the police and some secret service men, he had located and set a watch, with his characteristic thoroughness, on every aeroplane hangar in and about New York.

Even as the three plotters moved over to the aeroplane one of Craig's detectives lay hidden directly under the runway.

Out on the aviation field, in front of the hangar, Sprague had dragged the aeroplane down the runway, and there he stopped to explain to Wu and Long Sin the workings of the gyroscopic stabilizer.

"I'll make the flight to Lakewood easily," he remarked, then tapping the bundle of arrows confidently, added, "and it won't be long before Elaine and that fellow Jameson are settled, you bet."

"I shall go with you," he said at length ironically to the aviator.

"Very well," Sprague agreed. "Two of us will make it twice as certain."

He climbed into the machine, and Wu followed.

Kennedy's detective, from his hiding place, had not missed a motion. As the aeroplane disappeared he crawled out and quickly made his way down the road.

Meanwhile, high over the country, Sprague and Wu were flying, easily picking out the general direction of Lakewood.

People at Lakewood may still recall the aeroplane that circled again and again over the town and the beautiful estates. Sprague finally located Wellington Brown's, but Elaine was not there, and there was no use wasting the precious arrows on anyone else. Wu peered about eagerly through a field glass.

"There they are—over on that hillside," he muttered with a low, guttural exclamation.

Sure enough, they could see Elaine under the umbrella, quite conspicuously, with myself posed some way away.

"Hurry—speed it up," Wu urged Sprague, indicating the exact spot.

Kennedy had hastened out to the fort even before our departure, and there he had met Lieutenant Waters. As they were examining the freight car, an orderly came running to them. "Is there a Professor Kennedy here?" he asked.

"Yes," spoke up Craig. "I am Mr. Kennedy."

"Someone on the telephone, sir. You can take it at the guardhouse. He says it's urgent."

Craig hastened across with the orderly.

"I've located our man," shouted his detective over the wire, "an aviator named Sprague—a crook and a dope fiend. Somehow they have found out that Miss Dodge has gone to Lakewood with Mr. Jameson. Sprague has just gone in the aeroplane, carrying a bundle of aero arrows, with that Chinaman, Wu Fang."

"The deuce!" muttered back Craig. "Well, you get the local police in force and surround the hangar. Arrest them if they return. I must get to Lakewood myself."

He hung up the receiver and was about to dash out, when another idea occurred to him.

"Lakewood, 629," he almost shouted at long distance. "Hello—oh, is that Mr. Brown? Is Elaine there? This is Kennedy. Gone sketching with Jameson? Well, for heaven's sake, find Jameson at once and tell him to keep Elaine under cover until I get there. Good-by! Waters!"

He hung up the receiver, called, as he hung up the receiver, "Have you got a car here—a fast one?"

"Yes, I'll get you one—in a minute," returned the lieutenant, hurrying out, followed nervously by Kennedy.

Standing by the fort entrance was an automobile in which Waters had mounted an aeroplane gun for scouting about the country after aero spies. He leaped into the car and Craig followed.

"Take the Tottenville Ferry. We're going to Lakewood," cried Kennedy. "And let her out!"

Down at Lakewood, Mr. Brown whose placid life was not accustomed to the high pressure under which he had been living, repeated the message to Mary.

"I'm not quite sure what he is talking about," he said doubtfully, still looking at the telephone and rubbing his head. "Where do you think Elaine and Mr. Jameson are?"

"I don't know, but they started that way," pointed out Mary anxiously. "Father, we must find them. Mr. Kennedy would never have telephoned if it hadn't been important."

Wellington Brown, at last spurred into action by his daughter, hastily ran out of the house.

Elaine had been sketching only a few minutes when we heard a shout behind us. There was Mr. Brown, hatless, his hair flying, running toward us, waving his arms wildly.

"Mr. Kennedy has just called up," he panted breathlessly, "and asked me to tell you, Mr. Jameson, to get Elaine under cover and keep her there till he comes."

The nearest shelter I could see was a bridge over a small creek, and I made for it as rapidly as I could.

We were not a moment too soon. There was the aeroplane with two men in it.

"Hurry—hurry," Wu was urging Sprague as he saw us moving across the hillside. Fly faster—so I can drop these arrows better."

On toward us swept the machine, as Wu urged its driver.

But we had been warned in time. "Make the turn and get away behind those trees," Wu shouted angrily above the deafening noise of the propeller. "Perhaps if they don't see us they'll come out again."

Gradually the drone of the aero engine grew more and more indistinct, and we cautiously came out from our shelter.

Through the trees Wu Fang was now straining his eyes at the field glasses, starting back to see us.

Apparently to him we had gone back, and Elaine was under the umbrella, while I was speaking to her and leaving her there, although the umbrella hid her from him.

"Turn back now," cried Wu.

In a huge, wide circle, like a hawk, Sprague turned while Wu eagerly got the heavy round package of arrows ready to release. Meanwhile I managed to get behind a big tree, where I could see, but could not be seen.

"Now," ground out Wu, releasing the bunch of deadly arrows.

Down they came, hurtling from the sky, piercing the gaudy umbrella in a dozen places.

Wu's exclamation of satisfaction at hitting the mark quickly turned to rage, as he peered back through his glasses.

The umbrella was smashed, but under it, transfixed by the arrows, was a scarecrow which I had arranged.

Kennedy and Waters were literally eating up the miles of good Jersey roads on their way to us.

As they neared Lakewood, Kennedy heard, above the noise of the car, a familiar sound.

"Stop," he cried, "there's an aeroplane about. Hear it?"

As this terror in the air made off from us, Craig caught a glimpse of it, heaving in sight.

"Fire!" Craig directed as they approached the spot.

The aero gun barked hoarsely. Again and again it sent out shots.

"The devils!" growled Sprague, looking over anxiously at the gyroscopic stabilizer. "They have an aero gun—they've hit us!"

One shot had indeed penetrated the vacuum case of the gyroscopic and stopped the little flywheel inside. Instead of being an aid to safety, now the stabilizer was a positive menace.

The machine swayed and acted crazily as Sprague tried to catch it. Suddenly, to the surprise of Elaine, Mr. Brown and myself, who had no idea Kennedy was so close, we saw the aeroplane swoop down.

"Something's wrong with it," I cried excitedly. "Come!"

Perhaps half a mile up the creek, it had fallen with a splash, a tangled mass of wires and scrap, in the water.

Sprague, enmeshed in the debris, did not move. But Wu, though terribly shaken, had fallen on him, and with a superhuman effort, he pulled himself together and managed painfully to crawl up the bank into the hiding rocks and underbrush, before any of us arrived in either direction.

"Here it is," cried Craig, bursting through the brush.

"Dead," muttered Waters, examining Sprague. "The other